WESLEYAN CLASS MEETING: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCH RENEWAL AND GROWTH

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Abstract

Wesleyan Class Meeting: Its Relationship to Church Renewal and Growth

Nam Ok Lee

The purpose of this project is to explore the relationship between the Wesleyan class meeting and its contribution to church renewal and growth. The writer understands that the Wesleyan class meeting has been the broad platform for expanding Methodism in every country, and an important pattern for church growth and renewal. However, the class meeting was not always successful. There are several reasons for its successes and declines, depending on its context. The writer evaluates each context of the class meeting and its relationship to the existence of the class meeting.

In Chapter 1 the writer pursues the historical development of the class meeting in three different contexts: England, America and Korea, describing the motives for its birth, and its transition to the different contexts.

In Chapter 2 the writer focuses on the class meeting as a renewal and growth movement, identifying the concept of renewal and growth.

Chapter 3 covers two successful cases of the class meeting in Korea, and carefully examines the close

relationship between the class meeting and church growth.

The writer concludes that the class meeting has been a wonderful pattern for church renewal and growth, raising the issue of the necessity of its revival. The revival of the class meeting, including its content and form, will be the key to church renewal and growth in the coming century.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Korean Church had its one hundredth centennial missionary anniversary in 1984. The rapid growth of the Korean Church has been noted by Christians and ministers. Many theologians have studied the factors contributing to the rapid church growth in Korea.

According to Rev. Sun Do Kim, a pastor of the largest Methodist church in the world, there were several important factors in the remarkable growth of the Korean church, but he emphasized the influence of the class meeting to church growth. Also, Rev. Paul Y. Cho, who built the largest single congregation in the world, wrote, "the real secret of our church's growth is home cell groups."

Dean Kelley described several characteristics of strong churches in his book, Why Conservative Churches Are

Growing. They are: (1) a demand for wholehearted commitment from their members, (2) strong discipline, (3) missionary zeal-an eagerness to tell the Good News to the

¹ John A. Lovelace, "Church Growth in Korea,"

<u>United Methodist Reporter</u> (March 1982), reprinted in <u>Kwang</u>

<u>Lim Kyohye Samsip Yun Sa</u> [History of 30 years of Kwang Lim

Methodist Church] (Seoul: Kwang Lim Press, 1984), 311-313.

² Paul Y. Cho, "Ministry Through Home Cell Units," Korean Church Growth Explosion, eds. Bong Rim Ro and Marlin L. Nelson (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1983), 281.

³ Dean Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 57-58.

people, (4) absolutism about their aims, beliefs,
explanations of life, and (5) conformity in faith and lifestyle. Besides those factors of growth, he also pointed out
the factors contributing to the church's decline. Those
are: (1) emphasis on social action, (2) a "growing
secularism" and "consequent neglect of spiritual concerns,"
and (3) an "increasing dominance of the clergy" instead of
utilizing lay participation.4

According to the above writers, the small group is the pattern for church growth and spiritual emphasis is the content. The writer agrees that there is no church growth without providing the appropriate form and content for the growth. As a Methodist, the writer realized that the traditional small group meeting "class" was the great pattern for church growth. J.A. Leatherman writes, "The key to Methodist's secret of growth and power is to be found in the class meeting."

The father of Methodism, John Wesley, was a leader for the revival movement in eighteenth-century Great Britain.

John Wesley adopted the small group activities of the Moravians as the spiritual discipline for the Christians.

⁴ Ibid., 98.

⁵ J.A. Leatherman, "The Decline of the Class Meeting," <u>Spiritual Renewal for Methodism</u>, ed. Samuel Emerick (Nashville: Methodist Evangelical Materials, 1958), 39.

He renewed individuals as well as societies through spreading the Scriptural holiness. He renewed the nation through faith, not revolution. In a short time, Methodists were recognized as a growing group in Great Britain, U.S.A., and Korea.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Methodism grew rapidly and became one of the largest denominations. At that time, Rev. Anthony Atwood described several causes for the success of Methodism in his book, Why the Success of Methodism. Those are: (1) the circuit system, (2) the emphasis on personal experience, (3) revival movement, (4) camp meetings, and (5) the pursuit of Christian holiness.

Among those, the circuit system was directly related to the classes and societies. A circuit rider might visit the local church only once or twice annually, while the lay preacher and class leaders were regularly exhorting the people, organizing them into regular classes for discipline, and guiding their spiritual life. The lay preachers who were appointed by the itinerant preacher, always led the classes or society by supporting their spiritual growth in love and holiness. In a few years, these small societies became a self-supporting church, each with a stationed pastor to care for them.

⁶ Anthony Atwood, Why the Success of Methodism (Philadelphia: National Publ. Assoc., 1884), 2-99.

After stationed preachers came, the class meeting seemed to be unnecessary, and gradually disappeared. The decline of the class meeting brought the decline of the Methodist movement because Methodists lost the proper context for spiritual discipline. Henkle wrote,

Surrender class meetings, and itinerancy can no longer be sustained in its efficiency; surrender itinerancy, and Methodism is extinct, so far as regards its grand original design, the spreading of Scripture holiness over these lands.7

Through the writer's actual ministry, the class meeting as a small group activity broadly influenced the growth of the local church, and the renewal of the institutionalized church. Class meetings held the Christians together in the strong bonds of holy love and joy. Rev. Sun Do Kim supports the writer's understandings.

Church growth takes place because the renewal takes place in every area through the effective small group activities. Through class meeting activities, our church experienced renewal in prayer, Bible study and fellowship.

Renewal makes people grow. Renewal makes people bring new people to the community of faith. The class meeting is the key to evangelism, and becomes a center of revival for the neighborhood. The class meeting is the living cell of

⁷ Moses M. Henkle, <u>Primary Platform of Methodism</u> (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publ. House, 1859), 106.

⁸ Sun Do Kim, "Pastoral Care and Counseling,"
Korean Church Growth Explosion, eds. Bong Rim Ro and Marlin
L. Nelson (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1983), 267.

the Body of Christ, and cells function like the human body.

Therefore, in a living body, the cells grow and divide.

The writer understands that there is no church growth without internal renewals. The vitality of Christianity is based on renewal. The church can grow through the people's work who are renewed through the Spirit of God. Every big church starts with the very few renewed people.

The assumption of church growth through internal renewal has brought the writer to the conclusion that the Methodist class meeting is the pattern for spiritual renewal and growth. Without exception, Methodism extended herself through the class meeting activities. J.R. Green, in his book, <u>History of the English People</u>, declared that the class meeting was the broad platform for expanding Methodism in Britain. Methodism grew both quantitatively and qualitatively through the class meetings.

Therefore, the writer will focus on the nature of the class meeting and its relationship to the renewal and growth of the church by studying the renewal and growth factors of the class meeting. Chapter 1 traces the historical background of the Wesleyan class meeting in England, America and Korea. It will cover its birth and organization.

Chapter 2 deals with the relationship between the class

⁹ J.R. Green, <u>History of the English People</u> (New York: Harper & Bros., 1880), 126.

meeting and church growth. Chapter 3 describes two successful cases of the class meeting in Korea, and presents the direct relationship of the class meeting to renewal and growth of the Korean church. The conclusion will suggest the necessity of the revival of the class meeting as a significant pattern for church renewal and growth.

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CHAPTER 1

Class Meeting: Its Historical Development

Class Meeting in England

John Wesley's theology cannot be studied without reference to his ministry, and his ministry cannot be evaluated without an understanding of his practice of theology. His importance for the Christian tradition lies in his practical churchmanship, and practical theology for the common people. His theology was broadly practiced in a small group or society. Among those, the class meeting was the place where his theology was practiced. The attempt is therefore made to trace the origins of the early Methodist class meeting in the context of Wesley's theology of the church, and its relationship to the Methodist revivals.

The years 1738 to 1740 were the most critical period to John Wesley because four different crises hit his life during this time. Those are: (1) failure of the mission for American Indians in February 1738, (2) his heart-warming experience on May 24, 1738, (3) facing field preaching in April 1739, and (4) his withdrawal from the Fetter Lane Society on July 20, 1740 and his establishment of his own United Society. These crises influenced the direction of

his ministry in his concept of the church.

John Wesley's spiritual quest started in 1725. During this period, he was strongly attracted to mysticism. In 1725, he read Bishop Taylor's <u>Rules of Holy Living and Dying</u>, and was especially struck with the chapter of intention. He "felt a fixed intention to give himself up to God, and longed to give God all his heart."

In 1727, he read Law's <u>Christian Perfection and Serious</u>

<u>Call to a Devout and Holy Life</u>, and "more explicitly

resolved to be all devoted to God in body, soul and

Spirit." Law's book influenced Wesley's personal and pious

discipline until he met another group, the Moravians.

Holy Club

Wesley stayed at Oxford from 1729 until 1735 by teaching, studying and tutoring. In 1726 and 1729, he served as his father's assistant at Epworth and Wroot on two separate occasions.

When he returned to Oxford, he found that a small group had been gathered for Bible study, mutual spiritual discipline and care, and frequent communion. He became the

^{1.} Howard Snyder, <u>The Radical Wesley and Patterns</u>
<u>for Church Renewal</u> (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 13.

^{2.} Albert C. Outler, ed. <u>John Wesley</u> (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), 79.

^{3.} Ibid.

leader of the group, named Holy Club, which was called "Methodist." The Holy Club was simply "a Society of very young men and very earnest High Church men, with evangelistic views and a true desire to lead the lives of exemplary Christians."

Its primary goal was the spiritual discipline of its members. Good works were an expression of good faith. For the social welfare work, John and Charles Wesley, and other members of the club visited prisoners and poor families. This Oxford Holy Club became an excellent example of the small group meeting which was later organized by John Wesley, and of the social action of the Methodists toward society and the world.

Religious Societies

In organizing the Holy Club, the Wesleys took an idea from the religious societies which were experienced by the Church of England over the previous forty years. For example, around 1676, Anthony Horneck gathered a group of young men in London who liked "to apply themselves to good discourse and to things wherein they might edify one

⁴ J. Edwin Orr, <u>The Re-Study of Revival and</u> <u>Revivalism</u> (Los Angeles: Oxford Association, 1981), 1.

⁵ C.E. Vulliamy, <u>John Wesley</u> (New York: Scribner, 1932), 53.

another."6

In fact, the meetings were to be made up mostly of the reciting of liturgical prayers and the reading of books of practical divinity, led by Anglican ministers. In England, many religious societies were organized, impacting the church renewal movement. By the early 1700s at least forty societies were meeting in the London area.

Therefore, religious societies were not new to the Wesleyan brothers. Their father had been an ardent supporter of this movement. Also, his mother, Susanna Wesley, had organized societies for the salvation of souls. The design and purpose of the small religious society set up by their parents at Epworth provided a useful example for the early society at Oxford, and the United Society at London.

<u>Aldersqate</u>

When Wesley returned to London in 1738 from Georgia, he met the young Moravian missionary, Peter Boehler. Peter Boehler was an effective band-organizer, which was impressive to John Wesley, especially regarding the concept

Rupert E. Davies, <u>Methodism</u> (London: Epworth, 1976), 31.

^{7.} Snyder, The Radical Wesley, 15.

^{8.} Martin Schmidt, <u>John Wesley: A Theological</u>
<u>Biography</u>, vol. 1, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 63.

of "collegia pietatis, seen as ecclesiola in ecclesia - that is, the little circle of serious Christians existing within the large church." Moreover, Wesley was impressed with Boehler and his convincing conversion by faith alone. Influenced by Boehler, Wesley began to seek true understanding and experience of salvation by faith.

This effort led him to the heart-warming experience at Aldersgate on May 24, 1738. On May 24, 1738, Wesley went to that meeting in Aldersgate which was led by James Hotton, a key figure both in Aldersgate and in the Fetter Lane Society, and an important link between Wesley and the Moravians, and he heard someone reading Luther's preface to Romans.¹º He felt his heart strangely warmed: "I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation."¹¹ Wesley then "began to pray with all my might" and then "testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart."¹² Assurance had come to Wesley.

Fetter Lane Society

Before the rise of the Methodist United Societies, there were other religious societies such as the Fetter Lane

⁹ Frederick A. Norwood, <u>The Story of American</u> <u>Methodism</u> (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 32.

¹⁰ Snyder, The Radical Wesley, 25.

¹¹ Outler, 66.

¹² Ibid.

Society which was organized by John Wesley on May 1, 1738, acting upon the advice of Peter Boehler. 13

Even though John Wesley was an organizer, there are many reasons why the Fetter Lane Society was not called the Wesleyan Society. This first society consisted of sixty members who were also members of the Church of England. 14 There were also strong Moravian leaders such as Philip Molther and others. First of all, there were diverse opinions with regard to the nature and meaning of certain doctrinal contents.

Molther's idea of stillness offended Wesley while he was offended by Wesley's emphasis upon faith and good works together. 15

1739, Nov. 4, Sun. Our Society met at seven in the morning and continued silent till eight. One (Spangenberg) then spoke of "looking unto Jesus," and exhorted us all "to lie still in his hand." 16

Moravians taught that until they had true faith, they ought to be still, i.e., not to go to church, not to communicate, not to read the Scripture, not to use so much private

^{13.} John Wesley, <u>The Heart of John Wesley's Journal</u>, ed. Percy L. Parker (New York: Revell, 1903), 41.

^{14.} John Wesley, "With the Religious Societies," <u>The Journal of The Rev. John Wesley, A.M.</u>, vol. 2, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Epworth, 1938), 121.

^{15.} Outler, 353.

^{16.} Ibid., 354.

prayer, not to attempt doing spiritual good.17

Wesley withdrew from the Fetter Lane Society and established his own United Society. Even though he was converted through the influence of the Moravians, he could not compromise with their doctrines of no works, no law, and no commandments.

Here is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther, for better, for worse. Hence their "no works, no law, no commandments." But who art thou that "speakest evil of the law, and judgest the law." 18

United Society

Within a few months of beginning field preaching in 1739, Wesley had started the basic structure that was to mark Methodism later on. The new Society assembled at Foundery, about November 9, 1739.

In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely on Thursday, in the evening. 19

This was the rise of the United Society, first at London and

¹⁷ Ibid., 357.

¹⁸ Ibid., 366.

¹⁹ John Wesley, <u>The Works of John Wesley</u>, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 8:434.

then in other places. Such a society is no other than

a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation. Eo

Class Meeting

The class meeting was unique for Methodism as a means of grace. John Wesley experienced its usefulness and its vitality from the band meeting of the Moravians. However, the class meeting was not started as a means of grace, but for the purpose of paying off the debt on the New Room.

On February 15, 1742, the Society gathered to discuss a solution for the debt on the New Room. A captain Foy suggested that each member of the Society should pay a penny a week to pay off the debt. Also, Foy was willing to collect the money from ten to twelve persons, and make up any deficiencies. Others followed to do that. Therefore, the whole Society was divided into little groups.

While they collected the money from the members, they faced many troubles and problems from the members. It immediately gave some insights to Wesley.

This is the thing: the very thing we have wanted so long. I called together all the leaders of the classes and desired, that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those

²⁰ Ibid., 8:267.

²¹ John S. Simon, <u>John Wesley and the Methodist</u> <u>Societies</u> (London: Epworth, 1952), 63.

whom he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected.

As soon as possible, the same method spread to London and other places. Every Society became a larger one and soon divided into other societies. Each society was divided into a little class with one person as the "lay leader." They agreed to meet together once a week, at members' houses, and give advice or reproof as needed.

Therefore, in addition to collecting the money for debts, they easily formed a Christian fellowship, and worked out their salvation together. Members began to share one another's burdens and to care for each other in Christian love and joy.

<u>Band</u>

A band was formed for intensive discipline for Christian perfection. Men, women, married and unmarried persons met weekly in separate bands. Following the leader, the members shared their faults, temptations, hidden sins, and triumphs. The leaders examined the exact spiritual and moral condition of all the members and helped them to grow in the light of the Gospel.

Wesley issued the Class Ticket to the Society members

^{22.} Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, 8:267.

as an important symbol of identity. He had first adopted this method at Bristol and Kingswood, and had quickly realized its effectiveness. By combining the issue of tickets with a quarterly examination of the classes by John Wesley, or one of his preachers, those who were keeping the Society rules were encouraged, and those who were "disorderly" could be removed in a "quiet and inoffensive manner."

The classes became the basic format for Methodist fellowship. However, there were important differences between classes and bands. The bands had been organized according to age, sex and marital status; the classes were divided according to members' respective places of abode.

During the nineteenth century, the class meeting still remained in England as the chief expression of fellowship.es

Attendance was an essential condition for continued

membership in a society. However, by 1912, this requirement

²³ David Lowes Watson, "The Origins and Significance of the Early Methodist Class Meeting" (Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ., 1978), 323.

²⁴ Wesley, <u>The Works of John Wesley</u>, 8:256-7.

²⁵ Mary Alice Tenney, "The Origin and History of the Methodist C. ss Meeting," <u>Spiritual Renewal for Methodism</u>, ed. Samuel Emerick (Nashville: Methodist Evangelical Materials, 1958), 18.

had been officially rejected. 20

Class Meeting in America

Beginning

Long before the arrival of Methodism, Christianity had been growing in the English colonies. Immigrants moved to the new land with their traditional beliefs and practices. However, their social, religious and political context was complex and unsettled. Between 1760 and near the end of the century religious conditions were at the lowest level in American history.

Two distinctive lay preachers were instrumental in planting Methodism in America: Philip Embury, founder of the New York Methodist Society, and Robert Strawbridge, founder of the Maryland Society. Embury was a local preacher in Ireland before he came to this country, and settled in the city of New York. A Methodist woman, Barbara Heck, had the honor of being the prime mover in organizing the New York Methodist Society.²⁷

The preachers that Wesley sent were also important in early Methodist developments in America. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, the first itinerant preachers sent by

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hilary T. Hudson, <u>The Methodist Armor</u> (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1922), 12.

John Wesley, arrived in America in 1769.20 This was the result of Thomas Taylor's asking for more experienced leadership from John Wesley in 1768.

Expansion

The Strawbridge home was the first focal point of organized Methodism in America, and through the effects of Strawbridge and his assistants, the South remained the chief stronghold of Methodism. Some of the members of Strawbridge's Maryland Society became class leaders. One class was led by John Evans, meeting in his cabin, and another in the home of Evan's brother-in-law, Andrew Poulson, on Pipe's Creek. The class at Andrew Poulson's became a society, and needed a bigger place like a chapel in 1783. A society was begun in Baltimore County, in Daniel Evan's home, another in Gun Power Neck at Joseph Presbury's, another at Nathan Perigau's in Patapsco Neck, and still another at the Gatch Farm. At the first conference in 1773, almost half of the membership was to be found in Maryland.

Also, in New York, Embury's group was soon growing and moved to a large house, where Embury enrolled some of his

^{28.} Ibid., 25.

^{29.} Frank Baker, <u>From Wesley to Asbury</u> (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1976), 35.

^{30.} Ibid.

^{31.} Ibid.

listeners into a weekly class meeting. The In 1770, Embury and most of the German members of the Society left the city, moving to Camden in Washington County, New York. There he continued to preach and organize small societies.

Another man was Thomas Webb who formed the first

Methodist Society in Philadelphia. In 1765, Webb was

converted, and joined a group of Methodists in Bristol where
he shortly became acquainted with John Wesley. In 1767 or

1768, he went to Philadelphia, where he formed a Methodist

Society. His work was also extended into Delaware. Webb
was the first Methodist to preach in Trenton, and he also
held class meetings in Burlington. Thus he planted

Methodism in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. 34

The Great Leader, Francis Asbury

Francis Asbury was the British preacher who made the most contributions to early American Methodism while the lay pioneers were working successfully in various places. He was the great leader, organizer, and a creative builder for American Methodism. He especially focused on organization and strict discipline.

³² W.J. Townsend, Herbert B. Workman and George Eayrs, eds. A New History of Methodism, 2 vols. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), 2:77.

³³ Ibid., 2:79.

³⁴ Frederick E. Maser, <u>The Dramatic Story of Early American Methodism</u> (New York: Abingdon, 1965), 37.

Francis Asbury discovered a laziness in discipline in the societies which were formed by lay preachers. Therefore, Asbury immediately began to urge strict discipline upon them with great energy. He expelled from the societies persons who were not ready to follow up the General Rules. Also, he realized that the members in the society did not know about Methodism and General Rules. He divided the people into classes and bands, and instructed them about the teachings and aims of Methodism. Most of the societies accepted Asbury's discipline, and he travelled to watch and supervise them frequently.

Once Thomas Coke and Asbury summarized the significance of the class meeting in their notes to the Discipline of 1978.

In short, we can truly say, that through the grace of God our classes form the pillars of our work, and, as we have before observed, are in a considerable degree our universities for the ministry. ³⁵

The basic unit of Methodism was the class, made up of a few believers in a given area with a class leader. Local ministry was contrasted to the traveling ministry. However, within the supervisional system, the class meeting was an important appendage to the traveling ministry. One minister had to take charge of many congregations which were

³⁵ Norwood, 131.

separated from each other by many miles. Therefore, the minister was not able to spend enough time with one congregation. To supply this lack of service, the members were divided into classes, and committed to the immediate care of a leader whose duty it was to meet, visit, admonish, and attend to them, and "carefully inquire how every soul in his class prospers; not only how each person observes the outward rules, but how he grows in the knowledge and love of God,"36 and report their condition to the pastor.

With this system in efficient operation, our itinerant plan works admirably; but, wherever this branch of our work is neglected, the itinerant wheels are clogged.²⁷

Decline of the Class Meeting

The Methodist movement experienced tremendous influence and expansion in the half-century between 1800-1850 in England. The key to its growth and power is to be found in the class meeting. Likewise, the class meeting was the genius of early Methodism in America. However, the class meeting in America does not exist any more. It has become a memory.

³⁶ William Sweet, <u>Religion on the American</u>
<u>Frontier</u>, vol. 4 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1946),
47.

³⁷ Henkle, 102.

The decline began around the mid-nineteenth century. There are possible explanations for its decline. First, the class meeting may have declined when people lost the spiritual need and continuing spiritual search. It is quite possible to possess the outward form, but without the real power of godliness. Therefore, only empty organizations remained, and gradually those organizations disappeared.

Losing spiritual need and a continuing spiritual search were strongly impacted by secularization, including industrialization. Materialism was spreading among the people, and even affected church life. The class meeting remained as a place of fellowship for the members, but it lost the spiritual intensity of the class meeting. Levings says, "an inward feeling of dislike to the exercise of the class room is evidence of a low state of religious experience."

Second, members had difficulties with strict discipline. Even though the class meetings were not as strict as those in England, the members felt the burden of the heavy duties and responsibilities put upon them. Especially in America, the emphasis on individual freedom of thought and action made it more difficult to follow strict

³⁸ Norwood, 257.

³⁹ John Atkinson, <u>The Class Leader: His Work and How to Do It</u> (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874), 160.

disciplines. Therefore, members did not enjoy participating in class meetings and attendance was declining.

In their addresses to the General Conference of 1852, the Bishops deplored an evident weakening of the traditional discipline of early American Methodism. 40 By 1845, the band had become practically discontinued. 41 Therefore, the 1864 General Conference made an attempt to reinforce discipline by authorizing a revised statement on "Neglect of the Means of Grace. 42 This regulation remained in the Discipline of the reunited church. The class meeting was regarded as an important means of grace but not as an absolute necessity to the individual and the church. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the requirement of attendance was abolished in 1866.43

Third, the most important reason for the decline of the class meeting was the change of itinerancy from traveling to stationed. Wade Barclay gave some statistics on the stationed appointment.

For example, of nineteen appointments in 1846 on the Newark District, New Jersey Conference, eight were stations. In that year, twelve of thirty

⁴⁰ Wade Barclay, <u>History of Methodist Missions</u>, vol. 3 (New York: Board of Mission, Methodist Church, 1957), 46.

⁴¹ Leatherman, 47.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Tenney, 18.

appointments of the Reading District were stations. The Cazenovia District, Oneida Conference, had in 1858 twenty six appointments of which thirteen were stations.44

After a stationed preacher came and weekly worship service was established, the class meeting was no longer useful and it was soon discontinued.

Fourth, its decline was influenced by social change. Gloster Udy studied the dynamic connection between cultural change and the class meeting. He understood that cultural and religious changes strongly impacted the existence of the class meeting. He stated,

In the class meeting the inevitable reorientation of values, the interpersonal relationships, the thorough transformation of individual character and conduct, produced emissaries, brought up in the old cultural traditions but now changed radically to such an extent, that their altered attitude and actions seem to have affected those who remained in the cultural status quo.⁴⁵

For example, the class meeting was rooted originally in the lower working class; after one hundred years, Methodism became middle class in its constituency. By 1850, according to the U.S. census, the Methodism as a denominational family had become the wealthiest church in the nation. Methodism was no longer the church of the common people. "It was

⁴⁴ Barclay, 3:40.

⁴⁵ Gloster Udy, <u>Key to Change</u> (Sydney: Donald F. Pettigrew, 1962), 112.

⁴⁶ Barclay, 3:49.

still a people's movement but its membership in the United
States now was predominantly of the middle class."47

Fifth, the class meeting needed to be modified to meet American's needs. The first Methodists brought with them many characteristic features of English Methodism. Some were preserved in America and some were modified to meet American needs. For example, English Methodists followed Wesley's instruction and the General Rules of Discipline, which were very strict and absolute. Once Wesley sent Thomas Rankin to America with the assignment of tightening discipline. However, the authoritative structures of English societies were challenged by the democratic spirit in the American common people.⁴⁸

The people in America immigrated to this new land because of religious freedom. The democratic spirit was growing strongly among the people. They were not British people who were governed by the unbending strictness of Wesley's authoritative discipline. They were different people in a different context. The leaders in America should not have transplanted English Methodism in America, but rather should have contextualized Methodism in the American context. A creative modification of the functions

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3:50.

⁴⁸ Norwood, 78-79.

of the class meeting was absolutely necessary. A right idigenous process might lead to the successful existence of the class meeting in the U.S.A.

Class Meeting in Korea

The First Pioneers

Church historians trace the planting of the Methodist
Church in Korea to the meeting in June 1883 between Min
Young Ik, ambassador plenipotentiary of the Yi dynasty, and
Dr. John F. Goucher, president of Goucher University in
Baltimore. As the Korean ambassador, Min traveled from San
Francisco to Washington, and Goucher, a Methodist from
Baltimore traveled east on the same train. At this meeting
Min asked Goucher to send Protestant missionaries to Korea
and Goucher responded willingly by asking R.C Maclay, a
Methodist missionary already in Japan, to take a trip to
Korea in June 1884.49

The missionary society was founded in 1819 under the leadership of Nathan Bangs. So A great forward movement in the missionary program of the Methodist Episcopal Church was inaugurated in 1869 when the woman's Foreign Missionary

⁴⁹ Everett N. Hunt, Jr., <u>Protestant Pioneers in Korea</u> (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), 12.

⁵⁰ Norwood, 330.

Society was organized.⁵¹ These two mission societies asked Maclay in Tokyo to establish the Methodist Mission Society in Korea and it was accomplished in Tokyo by Maclay on March 31, 1885 when the first Methodist missionaries arrived in Japan enroute to Korea.

In fact, Maclay was the first Christian missionary to enter the open door of the Hermit Nation. Maclay managed to receive permission from King <u>Ko-Jonq</u> to establish educational institutions and hospitals in Korea. Thus, on the basis of the foundational work of Min, Goucher, and Maclay the introduction of the Methodist Church in Korea was made possible.

The Methodists worked through two missions, establishing two separate annual conferences organically related to their respective churches in America. The Korean Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was set up in 1918. In 1930, the two conferences, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, were united to form an autonomous Korean Methodist Church. This mission was the fruit of the missionary movement in

⁵¹ Ibid., 331.

⁵² Methodist Church in Korea, General Board of Education, <u>Hankook Kamri Kyohyesa</u> [The History of Korean Methodist Church] (Seoul: Methodist Press, 1975), 371.

⁵³ Ibid., 372.

America during the nineteenth century. The Christian motive for the foreign mission was inherent in the Great Commission, "therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).54

Beginning of the Class Meeting

Although the class meeting was declining in America, missionaries brought the idea to Korea. The class meeting was a successful means for rapid church growth, and it was used by every denomination in Korea. The Korean Methodist Church has held class meeting since it started, patterned after Wesley's meetings. After Appenzeller came to Korea as a missionary, a form of class meeting to study the Scripture as was done in England or America, was organized as the first step. In the early mission days, one woman wrote,

I attended weekly woman's prayer meeting that Mrs. Noble held in her home. There, I learned to read and write. Then we learned of the Catechisms, the Temple keeper, outlines of the New Testament, and lessons from the four Gospels. Gradually, the women divided into classes and the more advanced women helped with the teaching. 55

Although medical and educational work provided the means of starting the first Christian work in Korea, the basic purpose was that of winning Korea for Christ. The

⁵⁴ All Bible references are from the Revised Standard Version.

⁵⁵ M.W. Noble, <u>Victorious Lives of Early Christian</u> in Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1927), 133.

first Sunday church service was held June 28, 1885 with the Allens, Scrantons and Herons present. On April 25, 1886, the first service of baptism was held, not for Koreans, but for the infants of missionaries.

On October 9, 1887, the first public Methodist service for Koreans was held in a house which Appenzeller had bought in the southern part of the city, called Bethel Chapel.⁵⁷
The following Sunday, the first Korean woman was baptized.
She was the grandmother of Pauline Kim, who was a religious education worker for children in the Korean Methodist
Theological Seminary.⁵⁸ After this event, the class meeting began to work actively, and quiet evangelistic work was carried on at the personal level, as well as through public educational and medical work.

On January 1890, the first class meeting advisers and group leaders' meetings were held in Seoul. The Korean Methodist Church also was growing through the class meetings, and the growth of the church spread to the national level.

^{56.} Allen D. Clark, <u>History of the Korean Church</u> (Seoul: n.p., 1961), 68.

^{57.} Ibid., 70.

^{58.} Anna B. Chaffin, ed. <u>50 Years of Light</u> (Seoul: YMCA Press, 1938), 9.

^{59.} Methodist Church in Korea, <u>Hankook Kamri</u> <u>Kyohyesa</u>, 57.

John Wesley suggests several purposes for the General Rules of the United Societies, and the purpose of the class meeting was also reflected in the Book of Discipline of the Korean Methodist Church. According to the present Methodist Church discipline, the purpose of the class meeting is as follows:

First, the class members get together weekly in order to study the Bible and pray for the growth of the godly life of each member. Secondly, class members devote themselves to visitation and evangelism for the revival of the class meeting. Thirdly, sometimes, the class members contribute offerings for the church work. Fourth, a class meeting encourages communal fellowships among the members and improvement of one's spiritual life.60

In Korea, all denominations adopted the class meeting as a small group activity although the title of the class meeting varied. They were called: regional meeting, family circle meeting, home cell units or class meeting. Without exception, every church has these small groups and every member joins this meeting on a weekly basis. The deacons, Kwonsa, or elders are the class leaders in Korea.

^{60.} Methodist Church in Korea, General Board of Education, <u>Kyori Wa Janqjung</u> [Discipline of the Korean Methodist Church] (Seoul: Methodist Press, 1981), 57.

CHAPTER 2

Class Meeting: Its Relation to Renewal and Growth

Class Meeting: It Was a Renewal Movement

Church growth is God's will, and only a healthy church can grow. Otherwise, various diseases will be absolutely fatal. In order to grow, the church must be healed in the biblical sense. It needs renewal on various levels to be healthy.

Theologians and traditions have ushered forth from the history of the church which set the church on a course for renewal or revitalization. The whole process of renewal springs from the desire to keep a living relationship with Jesus Christ, and to live with the teachings of Jesus Christ. The living relationship includes three distinct relationships; her relationship to God, her relationship to the community of the faith, and her relationship to the world.

According to Baker's <u>Dictionary of Theology</u>, renewal is "an integral concept in Christian theology, denoting all those processes of restoration of spiritual strength subsequent to and proceeding from the new birth." Renewal

¹ Donald Guthrie, "Renewal," <u>Baker's Dictionary</u> of <u>Theology</u>, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 443.

has roots in the Bible. God has always had a desire to renew the relationship between Him and His creation. God chose Abraham to enter into covenant with Him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly" (Gen. 17:1-2).

This covenant, while beginning with Abraham, had its procession through the Jewish people. The plan of this convenant was fulfilled in the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the New Covenant. God was incarnated into human history to redeem His people as promised in the Gospel of Luke 1:31-32.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his Kingdom there will be no end.

Renewal, as seen through the eyes of redemption, is first a renewal of the individual. This is the case for the Apostles Peter and Paul. They had to be renewed by the Spirit of God before they could go forward to witness to the world.

In the Pauline letters, renewal is set within the context of a new creation, and the new creation is set over against the old. The old is the creation of Genesis 1 and 2, man fallen in Adam through his transgression (Gen.

3:17; Rom. 5:12ff), and continuing under the effects and dominion of sin (Rom. 8:19-22). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The change is not just a superficial one affecting outward conduct, but an inward one transforming one's values, desires, goals and attitudes. Paul was a persecutor of the church, became a new creation, and God's instrument for the Gentiles' evangelism. His goal of life was only to glorify God's will by giving up all of the lifestyles in the old. Therefore, the new man is said to be "renewed in Knowledge after the image of God" because the image has been marred by sin and disobedience (Col. 3:10).

The modern church is losing members rather than gaining. Whereas in 1958 forty-nine percent of the population in the United States of America attended religious services, by 1979 it had dropped to forty percent. Mainline denominations such as the United Presbyterian Church, the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Protestant Episcopal Church experienced a total accumulated

² O.E. Costas, "A Wholistic Concept of Church Growth," Exploring Church Growth, ed. Wilbert Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 95.

drop in membership of 62.6 from 1960 to 1979. Even the Southern Baptist convention, which grew by 34.5 percent from 1950 to 1960, saw its increase drop to 31.6 percent from 1960 to 1970.

Losing members means that the church is not healthy anymore, and has various diseases to be healed. The church should affect the whole world because the church is a part of God's plan for enlightening the world with the Good News. However, the church is not going to influence the world, unless it renews itself.

Jenson pointed out some principles which the church should follow to be healthy. Among those principles, the small group cell is the primary base of a healthy church. Description and the small group cell because of leadership development. Also, members will have close relationships with each other, resulting in personal growth. This individual growth will be attractive to those outside the church and this provides for quantitative growth. Small groups are also the key to organic growth because a healthy cell will be divided, and multiplied.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ron Jenson and Jim Stevens, <u>Dynamics of Church</u> <u>Growth</u> (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 17.

There are numerous factors which contributed directly or indirectly to the Wesleyan movement in England. When John Wesley was born in 1703, some of the most significant turning points in English and European history had just occurred. A number of important general developments were beginning to transform the character of life, society and civilization. It was imagined that all religion had a common basis in what we call natural religion. Christianity itself was no longer absolute. Accordingly, great secularization had been manifest here and there.

During the eighteenth century, two revolutions overtook England. First was the agricultural revolution, which increased the output of food enormously. Its result made the rich farmers richer, and the poor agricultural laborers were driven off the land. The poor agricultural laborers moved to the city, and built up the largest city slums.

Secondly, the industrial revolution produced unemployment of the handmakers, low pay, and poor working conditions especially for women and children. Those groups also moved to the city and lived in wretched situations.

⁶ Herbert Butterfield, "England in the Eighteenth Century," A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, vol. 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth, 1965), 6.

⁷ Richard M. Cameron, <u>Methodism and Society in</u>
<u>Historical Perspective</u> (New York: Abingdon, 1961), 28.

Those who were rich became richer and those who were poor became poorer.

Therefore, there was a feeling of isolation and social barriers between groups. The lower classes lived with a sense of great depression, or helplessness. The most grievous moral plagues of the age were drunkenness, robbery, thievery, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. The prisons were filled with criminals and those who could not pay back heavy penalties.

However, church leadership showed little concern for those serious social problems, and were not interested in spiritual affairs. If the ministers did not realize their religious responsibilities, church members and other citizens felt them even less. Religious sentiments were completely rejected. "Everyone laughed if anyone talked about religion."

Therefore, John Wesley once deplored the inefficacy of Christianity, saying, "Why is it then, that even in these parts Christianity has had so little effect?" He firmly declared that "None could be real Christians, without the help of Christian discipline. Now whatever doctrine is

⁸ Green, 707.

⁹ John Wesley, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., 3rd Am. ed., 7 vols. ed. John Emory (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1896), 2:437.

preached, where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers."10 He realized that individual Christians should be disciplined and renewed.

Otherwise, the sickness of society could not be cured.

Therefore, the Wesleyan renewal movement began with individual Christians in small group meetings. He knew that England needed both individual evangelism and social reform. However, he did not try to change the social structures and institutions. Rather, he sought social reform through the regeneration and transformation of human beings, and the spreading of Scriptural Christianity. That was the uniqueness of the Wesleyan renewal movement.

Renewal on a Personal Level

The subject matter of Wesley's renewal movement was personal experience of salvation, not doctrinal ideology or biblical information. All the converts were introduced to a class meeting, society, or band for a more in-depth religious experience. The final goal of the class meeting was the attainment of personal holiness, or what Wesley called "Christian perfection." In the class meeting, religious experience was the only subject of consideration and his theological concern was to lead the people along the road of salvation.

¹⁰ Ibid.

He understood that Scriptural Christianity is not "a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men's hearts and lives."

Therefore, Scriptural

Christianity begins with the heart of the people who believe in Jesus Christ by faith, and are accepted as a beloved child of God. The Bible says, "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father!" (Gal. 4:6).

John Wesley also emphasized spiritual discipline to the Christians. He was a good example of a man who gave oneself to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, reading Christian literature, and writing a journal. It was the means to a vital living relationship with the Holy Father. Besides these personal disciplines, John Wesley invited Christians to a group discipline, which was,

a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of Exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.¹²

In order to work out one's salvation, they were to discipline themselves by the prudential means of grace.

¹¹ John Wesley, "Scriptural Christianity," <u>The Works of the Rev. John Wesley</u>, 1:34.

¹² John Wesley, "The Rules of the United Society," John Wesley, ed. Albert C. Outler, 178.

Those are:

First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind....Secondly, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power. Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God.¹³

Moreover, Wesley invited them to the means especially instituted by Christ, which are: prayer, searching the Scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting and Christian conference. Among those, Wesley emphasized the Christian conference which was gathering together of believers into small groups for fellowship and nurture.

The goal of the spiritual discipline was to keep a living relationship with God, and to awaken the spirit of the people. Then, they became disciples of Jesus Christ, and witnesses of the Word to the community. Through spiritual discipline, Methodists could spread Scripture holiness over the land. The class meeting was the context in which this kind of spiritual discipline was practiced. In the class meeting, Christians work out their salvation together, including regeneration and sanctification.

Spiritual discipline was central for Wesley's renewal because Christian sanctification is not automatic. It must be disciplined, or cultivated. Therefore, Wesley's renewal movement began with personal renewal through spiritual discipline.

¹³ Ibid., 178-179.

Renewal on an Interpersonal Level

The Wesleyan renewal movement started when he understood the church as a fellowship. Fellowship in love is also central in classes. Real love is always more than a relationship between humans and God. It is also a relationship between human beings. They learn love, forgiveness, and acceptance in those small Christian communities. Christian fellowship in love is a restoration of genuine Christian relationship, and is the vital mark of the Christian faith. In classes, Christians nourished and sustained. Those fellowship groups became the channel for works of charity, and centers from which spirit-filled people went forth to live their faith in a larger society.

Especially for Koreans, the class meeting was the first experience of group fellowship in love. Before the missionaries came to Korea, there had been no group fellowship in love and care, no public opinion audible, and no eye that could see for the many. Society as a body had been blind and deaf. Korean Society is so interlocked and built up, and covered by sets of laws, that it got itself into a fixed and immovable condition. In this condition, the class meeting was a totally new experience for Koreans for building faith into the lives of its members through the teaching of the Bible and sharing of positive experiences in Christ.

Renewal on the Social Level

Sylvester Paul Schilling gives several social implications of Wesley's theology in salvation. Those are:

- 1. God has acted to redeem all human beings.
- Salvation is ethical throughout though not only ethical.
- Salvation is not only for the future, but relates to the life of men here and now.
- 4. Salvation relates to the whole life of man, which rightly seen is a stewardship, and
- 5. Salvation is realized within a community, and in this sense is itself social. 14

Wesley's Scriptural Christianity began with the personal renewal, or personal repentance. However, Wesley realized that there is social sin which prevents building the Kingdom of God in heaven and earth. That is different from individual sin or original sin. Social sin is produced by an immoral society, as Reinhold Niebuhr vividly pointed out in Moral Man and Immoral Society. Social relations are even harder to moralize than those of individuals. 15

Wesley's renewal movement began with the hearts of a few

¹⁴ Sylvester Paul Schilling, <u>Methodism and Society in Theological Perspective</u> (New York: Abingdon, 1970), 59-61.

¹⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, <u>Moral Man and Immoral</u>
<u>Society</u> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), 83.

Christians who early wanted to be children of God. And then, it aided in reforming the Church of England and in improving social conditions in the nation, and it certainly spread Scripture holiness over the land.

On many occasions he critically dealt with the social evils of his time. He castigated unfair business practices, attacked the manufacture and use of alcoholic beverages, pointed out the iniquity and folly of war, and boldly preached on the subject of slavery. The Wesleyan renewal movement was the greatest force for social change in the eighteenth century.

American Methodism was also faced with social injustice, such as racism (slavery), sexism, and abuse of alcoholic beverages. The essential dignity of man, the fundamental equality of all human beings and their rights of freedom, justice, and opportunities were repeatedly proclaimed. Methodists responded to the social issues by trying to save the world both within and beyond its doors. Wesleyan social concerns became a foundation of the Methodist social creed. Wesley's emphasis on social holiness was never fully lost within American Methodism.

The most important Wesleyan contribution to social action was to overcome classism and sexism. The response

¹⁶ Schilling, 61-62.

given to Methodism by the working classes was indeed extraordinary, because it gave them an opportunity to exercise their mental and religious power.

In the Methodist society working men, and even women, were often authorized to exercise their talents by doing evangelistic work on behalf of their church.¹⁷

Especially in the Korean context, the class meeting was the place where individuals were accepted as whole persons.

Influenced by Confucianism, the status of women and the lower-class people was very impersonal. Slavery had existed in Korea, as in China, from its earliest history. Female children used to be sold into slavery.

The most pervasive religious influence from Confucianism was ancestral worship. A male descendant is necessary in order to perform the sacrificial rites. The married woman's most important duty is to provide her husband's family with a male heir. Submission and faithful service to her lord were the ideals for women. Women had no way of participating in social activities and public education. Moreover, women had no name of their own.

The first graduate of Ewha University, Helen K. Kim, recalled the impressive story for us.

Mrs. Nansa Kim came tonight to call Miss Frey, setting the little lantern in front of Miss Frey.

¹⁷ Robert F. Wearmouth, <u>Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800-1850</u> (London: Epworth, 1947), 8.

She blew out the candle. Then pointing to the dark lantern, she said in her dramatic and positive way, "My life is like that — dark as midnight. Won't you give me an opportunity to find the light?" 18

Also, Helen Kim remembered her mother's delighted face when she had the chance to learn. She writes,

In her evening prayers, she would thank God for giving her daughter the privilege of learning, which she had been denied to learn. 19

Through education and discipline in the class meeting, Korean women became workers as Bible women. Gradually, they became spiritual leaders and pioneers for the women's liberation movement. It was a surprising change for women to learn. However, it was an unbelievable change for women to teach someone else.

The most important experience for the women and the lower classes was to be accepted as full persons in the light of the Gospel. The Society in Korea was divided into three classes: the <u>Yangban</u>, or gentleman class, the middle class and the <u>Cheonmin</u>, the lower class, which included skilled and unskilled workers, butchers, actors, and slaves. Poverty and social prejudice acted as a weight upon them, as did a lack of political freedom.

¹⁸ Helen K. Kim, "Methodism and the Development of Korean Womanhood," <u>Within the Gate</u>, ed. Charles A. Sauer (Seoul: Korean Methodist News Service, 1934), 78.

¹⁹ Helen K. Kim, <u>Grace Sufficient</u> (Nashville: Upper Room, 1964), 16.

In this condition, the class meeting was a relewal place for equal opportunity and recovering human dignity. The lower class and women became equal participants with males in God's salvation. In the New Testament we can see that Jesus accepted all kinds of people as full persons. Also, Jesus liberated women from the concept of second-class citizenship so that they could become whole persons. The worth of a person is recognized and respected when he or she is granted full freedom of opportunity and free personal development. The Spirit of Jesus makes all things new and free.

The class meeting was the cradle of the Korean feminist movement, as John Wesley himself came to make liberal use of women; it might be claimed that the emancipation of womanhood began with Wesley. Po The bondage to the past, the bondage to Confucianism, the bondage which enslaved womanhood mentally, physically, and spiritually were to be broken by the women as they came under the guiding light of Christ's saving power.

Moreover, one of the major contributions of the missionary work was to revive the vernacular language. The Chinese language was a formidable barrier to the propagation

²⁰ Robert F. Wearmouth, <u>Methodism and the Common</u>
<u>People of the Eighteenth Century</u> (London: Epworth, 1945),
223.

of ideas among the masses. The missionary revival of the simple vernacular script opened up a new day for Korean women, and had a large impact on the spread of literacy among the common people. Having an easy language to read and write was the means to understanding the Good News in the class meeting. Language was the medium for entering the world of history and culture more in depth. The Korean Script also seems to have been providential means for the spread of Christianity. A person old and unlearned could learn the alphabet and read simple things in a few days' work.

Now, a new world was opened for the common people, including lower laboring classes and the women who had no opportunities to learn, read and write. Human dignity, equality and a sense of true freedom were the fruits of the class meeting activities under God's redemptive love of everybody.

We understand that a prime purpose of Wesleyan theology has been to share the Good News and the new life to which the Christian tradition witnesses. "For Wesley, structure

²¹ James Dale Van Buskirk, <u>Korea, Land of the Dawn</u> (Toronto: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1931), 46.

was dictated by mission - form followed function."22
Christianity fulfills an apostolic responsibility to share and witness together.

Class Meeting: It Was a Growth Movement

Methodism arose as a strong, outspoken renewal movement, not only against the existing conditions of life and thought, but for Scriptural holiness. Its effect was to revitalize the church and society. Methodists stressed the personal experience of repentance, faith, regeneration, and sanctification. They sought no reformation of beliefs or doctrines, but a renewal of persons and of believing in religion.

The Bible revealed that the church is the living body of Christ, and that living body is the representation of Christ in today's world. For example, the basis of the letter to the Ephesians could be summed up in the words, "in Christ." Paul called the church "in Christ" to become the body of Christ and to grow into maturity. God wanted both the individual members and the corporate body of His church to prosper. It was the mission of the early churches in Ephesus or elsewhere.

As a body of Christ, the church should be renewed continuously and reach out into the world to make disciples

²² Thomas A. Langford, <u>Practical Divinity</u> (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 268.

on earth. God called Christians to grow. Therefore, church growth is directly related to God's will. On the occasion of his ascension, the Lord Jesus commanded His Apostles to make disciples, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples" (Matt. 28:18-19). If any church does not concern itself with the growth of the body of Christ, it will be disobeying God's commandment.

The term growth suggests mobility and change; it indicates a living reality. Where there is growth, there is increase, expansion, transformation, and changes. Where there is no growth, there may be a decay. Therefore, C. Peter Wagner stated,

Church health and church growth are presumed to be closely associated. If a church is fully healthy, it will grow. Conversely, if a church is not growing in membership, there is probably something wrong with its health.²³

Church growth does not mean getting more members in one's church. It does not mean getting more money into the church. The foundation of church growth is theological. It is based on God's will and commandment. Therefore, church growth is obedience to God's will, and faithfulness to God's commandment. When God sends harvesters into ripe fields, He

²³ C. Peter Wagner, "Church Growth Research," Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978, ed. Hoge Roozen (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 270.

wants them to come out bearing sheaves.

There are different kinds of growth: biological, sociological, psychological, intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional. Also, there are different qualities of growth: positive or negative, enriching or damaging, healthy or unhealthy. O.E. Costas mentioned that the wholistic growth of the church means,

The process of integral and normal expansion that should be expected from the life and mission of the church as the fellowship of the spirit, the body of Christ, and God's covenant people.²⁴

Therefore, according to Costas, church growth is the balanced increase in quantity, quality and organizational complexity of a local church.

First of all, quantitative or numerical growth is implied in the great commission of the Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). A church grows in numbers when people witness to those outside the church. It is the important evangelistic work of the church. The desire for numerical growth is biblical. There are many ways to increase the membership of the church, but whatever method is adopted the importance is to invite people into a living relationship with the living body of Christ.

Secondly, Acts 2:42-43 describes people who are growing qualitatively in their relationship to Christ and to His

²⁴ Costas, 100.

body, the church. Prior to conversion, they did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. After they experienced Jesus as their savior, they entered into a deep relationship with Christ, and were changed from their old forms of life into the new way of life in Christ.

Therefore, Jenson writes,

Qualitative growth is the progressive development of the body into the likeness of its head, Jesus Christ. As the church grows, it will become increasingly Christ-like in its corporate behavior and character.²⁵

Thirdly, organic growth is reflected in the organization and structural development of a church. A church is a complex organism which must meet the various needs. In order to grow continuously, a church should be willing to change its structure for the big. When a church does not want to change its organization, it will stop growing qualitatively and quantitatively.

The class meeting was a context for growth in the individual and the church. Rev. Paul Cho revealed that the secret of their church growth was in a home cell unit, and wrote, "If you have a strong cell system, then you will have a strong church...church growth is not limited." Also, Rev. Sun Do Kim wrote, "If no small group activity is

²⁵ Jenson and Stevens, 12.

²⁶ Paul Y. Cho, <u>Successful Home Cell Groups</u> (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1981), 65.

effectively operating among the church members, church growth will not take place."27

The class meeting in Korea is still prosperous, and every denomination adopted small group activities for spiritual renewal and growth. In spite of the different names, the nature and the role of the class meeting are the same. However, it is true that not all churches who have class meetings are growing. The class meeting itself is not a magical pattern for church growth. It is the content of the class meeting that is directly related to church growth. The true value of the class meeting is not in the form, but in the spiritual intensities of the gatherings.

Wesley was a visionary, one who claimed all the world as his parish. He did not mention about church growth. However, he frequently used church growth terms such as "increase," "spread," "advancement," and so on. His goal for spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land indicates that he eagerly wanted God's church to grow. And then, what kind of growth do the churches have? What kind of growth are they seeking? We can see several kinds of growth through the class meeting activities.

Growth in Upportunity

In the class meeting, lay people began to have an

²⁷ Sun Do Kim, "Pastoral Care and Counseling," 266.

opportunity to share the leadership. Before the Wesleyan movement, only the clergy were spiritual leaders. But, Wesley utilized the lay people to share the leadership, and trained them to be leaders. The class leader became a most important part of the lay leadership in early Methodism. Lay leadership has a biblical foundation. Jesus selected and trained His disciples, and commanded them to continue His work on earth by the guidance of the Spirit. The acknowledgment of the priesthood of believers is important to every Christian in the class meeting.

Moreover, John Wesley even appointed women as ministering servers. A considerable number of women of early Methodism felt themselves called to give public utterance to their Christian conviction.

Early Methodist women's mode of public expression might be listed as follows, proceeding from informal to the most formal, casual conversation, talks or prayers in band and class meeting, testimony, exhortation, expounding, biblical exegesis and application.²⁸

Lay participation in leadership was also an important change in Korean society. The lay leaders in Korea consisted of three classes: (1) the paid helpers of the mission, who labored under the direction of the missionary, (2) the native helpers employed by the missions, and (3) the

²⁸ Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary S. Keller, <u>Women</u> in New Worlds, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 1:71.

native volunteer workers that sprang up everywhere. For example,

A man in some village...became a follower of Christ. He instructed his neighbors in the fundamentals of Christianity itself. A group of converts then gathered about him, who in their turn carried the message to neighboring villages and towns...Christian influence was extended.

With the increasing sense of obligation by leaders to lead others to Christ, Korean church membership increased rapidly. This was one of the most practical examples of lay evangelism developed in class meetings.

Growth in Witness

One of the needs of a dynamic and growing church life is the eyewitness of the Gospel, or evangelism. If a church is not involved in serious evangelism, it will not grow, but rather will begin to die. The Evangelism is the command of Jesus Christ, "to go into all the world and preach the Gospel and make disciples." Each class meeting becomes the center of eyewitness of the Gospel, and a nucleus for revival in its neighborhood.

Growth in Stewardship

John Wesley emphasized the wise use of money and wealth

^{29.} George Herber Jones, <u>The Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church</u> (New York: Board of Foreign Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1910), 141.

^{30.} Howard A. Snyder, <u>The Problem of Wineskins</u> (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 141.

because "All we have, is not our own, but God's; all we can do is due to Him."³¹ If God is the maker and owner of heaven and earth, Christians are called to the responsible use and sharing of the world's resources for God's proper ends. Also, our approach to environmental and social issues should be instilled with a sense of stewardship rather than ownership.

The sense of stewardship grows in the class meeting as Christians grow in the grace of God's redemptive love. They became aware of their responsibility to society and neighbor. They recognized that their gifts, talents, and even money should be used in faithful stewardship and service to the neighbor and to all mankind. This idea of faithful stewardship became the ground of the social principles of the Methodist church later on.

³¹ John Wesley, "The Good Steward," The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, 1:457.

CHAPTER 3

Case Studies

For this thesis, the writer chose the two biggest Korean churches, one Methodist and one Pentecostal, because they have fine home cell group systems which have directly contributed to church growth. Kwang Lim Methodist Church is the largest Methodist church in the world and had 30,000 members in January, 1988. You'do Full Gospel Church is the largest single congregation in the world, having 530,000 members in January, 1988.

Kwang Lim Methodist Church

Rev. Sun Do Kim, senior pastor of this church, analyzed the main causes of Korean church growth as follows:

- 1. Korean churches are founded on prayer.
- 2. They are biblically oriented.
- 3. They experience explosive spiritual revivals.
- 4. They grow through historical tribulation.
- 5. Koreans have rich religious minds.
- 6. Members grow through the dedication of tithes.
- 7. Lay training and leadership.
- 8. Small group activities are encouraged.
- 9. Urbanization.

¹ Lovelace, 311-313.

Among the nine major factors contributing to Korean church growth, Kim mentioned that the small group activities are the major factor in Korean church growth. Also, he believes that the dynamic class meeting has been a major factor in the dramatic growth of Kwang Lim Methodist Church. Motives for Activating the Class Meeting

The class meeting in the Kwang Lim Methodist Church started on November 1953, right after the Korean War. The fifty members were divided into four class meetings. Until 1971 when Rev. Kim was appointed to this church, the church did not grow quantitatively. Kwang Lim Methodist Church became the largest Methodist church in the world in 1982 as a fruit of Kim's ten-year ministry.

According to Kim's understanding of ministry, the church is not the building but the community of the new humanity. Therefore, the ideal goals of the church's ministry are the building of the church and the increasing of God's love among all human beings. God has established a new humanity in history, in the midst of the old humanity. Therefore, the new kind of humanity of the faith brings something distinctive to the task of the healing of the human spirit. "The church offers nurture in a community

² Sun Do Kim, "The Training of Lay Ministers for Church Growth Through Small Groups in the Kwang Lim Methodist Church," (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theol. Seminary, 1983), 2.

where the human soul can be burdened, and find a sustaining, accepting love."3

Also, he discovers that the laity, in fact, all believers are called to ministry. There are various gifts and talents, but all are for the edification of the faithful and building up of the church's work. All believers are ministers, and this laity involvement was a crucial factor in the growth of the church. According to Rev. Kim, the recovery of the laity will have a positive effect upon the recovery of the church. Clergy and laity together make up the church, the body of Christ, and together they carry out the ministry of Christ given to the Body. "There is a difference of function, but each ministry is a service for Christ, and, as such, of equal status."

Therefore, Kim activated the class meeting which was handed over from the previous pastor of that church.

According to his understanding of ministry, the class meeting is the right place for exercising laity involvement, and recruiting new disciples. Moreover, the class meeting is the place for pastoral care and counseling by lay leaders. He introduced the idea that pastoral care and

³ Ibid.

^{4 [}bid., 18.

⁵ lbid., 23.

counseling is possible through various channels, such as pulpit ministry, home visitation, pastoral lay-training program, and cell group activities. Modern people need friendship and love from each other and a sense of belonging in the midst of dehumanized urban societies. He writes, "Cell groups certainly provide an opportunity for believers to meet each other's needs through the love of Christ."

Kim mentioned some of the positive functions of class meetings in his church: (1) Bible study, (2) fellowship, (3) evangelism, (4) training laity, (5) healing, and (6) prayer. He especially emphasized the healing functions of the class meeting. He writes, "In the meetings of our church classes so many people are healed of their spiritual and mental wounds, even physical diseases." A number of people have been healed through intercessory prayer in his church.

Because of these benefits from the class meetings, Kim reactivated the class meetings around their basic function — spiritual growth.

Its Organization and Unique Management

Class meetings consist of five to ten members who meet once a week. The groups are organized in the names of

⁶ Sun Do Kim, "Pastoral Care and Counseling," 266-267.

⁷ Ibid., 266.

⁸ Sun Do Kim, "The Training of Lay Ministers," 56.

church members, and their locations are carefully chosen to provide a network throughout Seoul. New church members are placed in a class meeting near their homes so that established members may help them make the transition into the church community.

Moreover the second of the sec

The curriculum for the class meeting is written by the pastors of this church, who know best about the context of the church. Therefore, the content of the teachings is very relevant to the members' present lives. 11 Moreover, the content of the teachings is directly related to the senior pastor's philosophy of ministry. 12 This basic management style underlies the entire Kwang Lim Methodist Church program. Kim's philosophy of ministry is as follows:

1. Positive theology for church growth.

^{9 &}lt;u>Kwang Lim Methodist Church</u> (Seoul: Kwang lim Press, 1988), n.p.

¹⁰ Kwang Lim Methodist Church, Board of Evangelism, Letter to writer, 21 Jan. 1988.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kwang Lim Methodist Church, n.p.

- 2. To have proper equipment for church growth.
- 3. Developing a Christian lifestyle for church growth.

His positive theology for church growth produced a healthy church, and was practiced in the class meetings.

Rev. Robert Schuller was impressed with his positive theology. "Dr. Sun Do Kim heard and believed what we taught at our institute: believe it and you can achieve it." 13

Every teacher or leader for the class meeting is trained every Tuesday before they have adult Bible study. They make a weekly written report of the previous meeting, as well as handling the offerings collected during that meeting. They also take care of each member who belongs to their class.

Its Relationship to Renewal and Growth

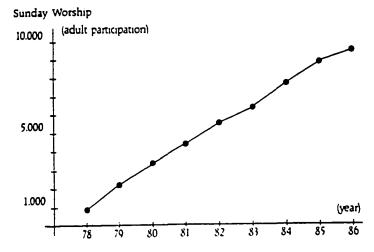
Kim agreed that the dynamic of the class meeting had been a major factor in the dynamic growth of Kwang Lim Methodist Church. He writes, "We give them the highest priority in our ministry." He emphasized class meeting activities because there is no church growth taking place without small group activities.

Church growth takes place because renewal takes place in every area through effective small group activities. He

^{13.} lbid.

^{14.} Sun Do Kim, "The Training of Lay Ministers," 141.

Adult Church Participation in Worship and Bible Class ADULT CHURCH PARTICIPATION



Year	Weekly Adult Participation	
1978	900	
1979	2.100	
1980	3.400	
1981	4.300	
1982	5.500	
1983	6.500	
1984	7,700	
1985	8.900	
1986	9,500	
1987	11.000	

The Adult Bible Class

Year	Weekly Adult Participation	
1978	100	
1979	180	
1980	220	
1981	250	
1982	320	
1983	. 950	
1984	1.600	
1985	2.200	
1986	2.500	
1987	2.800	

This information is taken from Kwang Lim Methodist Church.

described,

Through small cell group activities, our church has experienced renewal in prayer, Bible study and fellowship. They experience a healing, a reconciliation, and a forgiveness within those personal deep relationships.¹⁵

Renewal brings church growth through commitment, evangelism, and mission. Renewal makes people witness, and act, bringing new people to the new community of faith. One of the needs of a dynamic growing church is evangelism, and the class meeting is the door of evangelism to the new people.

The secret of his church growth is in the class meeting by emphasizing personal and group discipline. Personally, Kim followed up the Wesleyan way of self-discipline. Since his high school period, he woke up at 4:30 a.m. and prayed for at least one and one-half hours. Kim is convinced that at least fifty percent of the Korean population will be Christians by 2000 A.D. "They will be a great evangelistic force for Asia and world missions." He is convinced that church growth is not limited because God wants his church to grow. According to his ministry, the class meeting as a small group activity is the place for church renewal and growth.

¹⁵ Sun Do Kim, "Pastoral Care and Counseling," 267.

¹⁶ Lovelace, 313.

Yoido Full Gospel Church: the Pentecostals

The modern Pentecostal movement emerged "either about 1900 in a small Bible college near Topeka, Kansas, under the leadership of holiness evangelist Charles F. Parham, or half a dozen years later in a black mission on Azusa Street, Los Angeles." The characteristics of Pentecostalism were defined in various ways, including speaking in tongues and baptism by the Holy Spirit. The 1948 "Statement of Truth" of the Pentecostal fellowship of North America presented the concepts of Pentecostalism as follows:

We believe that the Full Gospel includes holiness of heart and life, healing for the body and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.¹⁸

In 1928, Mary C. Rumsey introduced the American

Pentecostal movement to the Koreans. However, it was not

officially Pentecostal because she was not an official

missionary from the Assembly of God in America. 19 However,

two years later, T.M. Parsons, an Assembly of God missionary

came to Korea, and started the Pentecostal movement in

¹⁷ Donald W. Dayton, <u>The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism</u> (Grand Rapids: Asbury, 1987), 16.

¹⁸ Dayton, 18.

¹⁹ Full Gospel Church, Board of Education, <u>Ha Na</u>
<u>Nim Ue Sung Hye Kyo Hye Sa</u> [History of the Assembly of God]
(Seoul: Seoul Press, 1987), 85.

earnest.²⁰ But, for twenty years, the Korean Pentecostal Church could not build a church revival, and remained the smallest church in Korea. In 1953, they realized the necessity of organization for strong missionary work, so they organized the Assembly of God denomination.²¹

This movement was not well known until Rev. Paul Y.

Cho's church was rapidly growing. Yoido Full Gospel Church was founded by Rev. Paul Yonggi Cho in a poorer area of Seoul, Korea. Assisted by Rev. Jashil Choi, and later by missionary John Hurston, this church gradually grew to become the largest church in the world, and kept growing with the charismatic leadership of Rev. Paul Y. Cho.

The church developed home cell units for church growth. The format is very similar to the class meetings of the Methodists. Cho understood that the home cell unit was begun by John Wesley. However, his emphasis was slightly different. Although the Pentecostal movement had its theological roots in the Wesleyan holiness movement, there were three different Pentecostal movements: the classical Pentecostal movement, the Neo-Pentecostal movement (charismatic movement) and the Catholic Pentecostal movement. The Yoido Full Gospel Church belongs to the

²⁰ Ibid., 98.

²¹ Ibid., 109.

classical Pentecostal movement, which teaches a three-stage way of salvation.

To the two stages of salvation (conversion and sanctification) in the Wesleyan holiness movement, classical Pentecostals added baptism in the Holy Spirit, which was characterized by speaking in tongues. According to Parham and Seymour, in three-stage Pentecostals, conversion is the first stage, sanctification the second, and baptism of the spirit, with speaking in tongues, the third stage. Experience the Wesleyan holiness movement emphasized the fruit of the Holy Spirit, while classical Pentecostals emphasized the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with speaking in tongues as a necessary concomitant of the Spirit. Amount of the Spirit.

While the church was growing, Cho conducted all the Bible study groups and other meetings by himself. He described,

Although the church continued growing, I still maintained my concept that the pastor was responsible for doing everything. This responsibility ranged from marrying to burying, from preaching to home visitation, from counseling to baptizing.²⁴

²² W.J. Hollenweger, <u>The Pentecostals</u> (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 25.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Paul Y. Cho, "From Breakdown to Build Up," <u>Home Cell System</u>, ed. Ruth Sholties (Seoul: Church Growth International, 1987), 17.

Finally, he collapsed on the pulpit and was hospitalized. While hospitalized, God helped him to understand the need for sharing leadership, through the example of Moses in Exodus 18.

I needed to delegate my ministry and authority to lay leaders, and allow them to more fully comprehend the necessity of giving to and receiving from each other. 25

Through these experiences, Cho came to understand that God wanted him to put lay leaders in charge of new home groups: these groups needed a teaching and evangelistic thrust aimed at the care of individuals of each group's community. Through activation of cell groups, the Full Gospel Church gained 530,000 members and 48,000 home cell units in January, 1988.

Organization of Home Cell Units

The home cell unit consists of 10-15 families who gather on a weekly basis. They divide the whole Seoul area into 21 districts, 351 sections and 48,000 home cell groups. Each district is further broken down into seven to twelve sections, each section containing 25 to 95 home cell units.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Cho, "Ministry Through Home Cell Units," 273.

²⁷ An Ne Suh [A Guidebook of Yoido Full Gospel Church] (Seoul: Seoul Press, 1988), n.p.

A district head is appointed over the membership of each district; over each section, a section leader. Home cell units are usually led by a deacon or deacons and often an assistant leader (see figure 2). Each The home cell unit leader is chosen on the basis of the visible expression of faith in his or her life, defined as: consistent attendance at church and at home cell meetings, faithfulness in tithing, enthusiasm and wisdom in his or her Christian work. The first qualification for leaders in this church is being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

Dependence upon the Holy Spirit is essential if a person is to lead the members of his cell group. In our church that means the leader must be baptized in the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Then we are assured of a person who can lead others to Christ and who can pray powerfully for the people's needs. This is particularly essential in praying for physical and spiritual healing.

In this sense, the nature of home cell units is more

Pentecostal or charismatic than any other churches. They

want to be filled with the Spirit in the home cell units.

The duties of the home cell units leaders are: (1) to care

for the members, (2) to attend the weekly training sessions,

(3) to lead the weekly home cell unit meetings, (4) to be

instrumental in evangelization, (5) to make a weekly written

²⁸ Cho, "Ministry Through Home Cell Units," 279.

²⁹ Ibid., 281.

report of the previous meeting and handling the offering taken during the previous meeting, (6) to faithfully attend Sunday and Wednesday services, and (7) if possible, to participate in the semi-annual leaders training conference.30

Growth-Producing Elements of Home Cell Units

The home cell units at Yoido Full Gospel church have resulted in greater growth in the lives of those who participate, and in increasing numerical growth of the membership of this church. There are many growth-producing elements in the home cell units system. Those are:

- Close fellowship is necessary for divinely directed giving and receiving.
 - 2. Ready access to an informed pastoral staff.
 - 3. Systematic Bible study in the home.
- 4. Faith active and contemporary in the community as well as in the church.
 - 5. Prayer need specific to the needs of the people.
- Opportunity for laity to be directly involved in evangelism.
 - 7. The creation of a spiritual climate.
 - 8. The mobilization of women power, and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 282-286.

 Reinforcement of the types of giving already practiced in the church.

Cho built the largest single congregation in the whole world through God's secret way. Many people ask what was the secret principle of his church growth. He understands that the traditional models of church growth and leadership do not work on such a large scale. But God has a secret for success, and he wants every church to have it. And he answered, "Real secret is home cell groups."

He already knew that many huge churches in Europe and America continue to have only a handful of worshippers. He knows that churches are dying now because they do not work for church growth. Church growth and evangelism are not automatic by-products. "A number of churches have tried and failed, because they disregarded certain basic principles."

According to Cho, home cell units are the foundation of his church's growth, and their success is the success of church growth. He emphasized two significant benefits of home cell units. First, they allow personal involvement in spite of a large size. In many other churches, a few selective members are involved in church activities, whereas

³² Ibid., 281.

³³ Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups, vi.

home cell groups provide a real opportunity for many people to be involved. Therefore, he likes to describe the Full Gospel Church as the smallest church in the world as well as the biggest church in the world. "It is the smallest church in the world - because every member is part of a home cell group meeting consisting of fifteen families or fewer." The Sunday service in Cho's church is very structured and traditional. But, in the home cell groups each one has an opportunity to be used by God to minister to the others in the group.

To our cell groups, although the leader teaches from the Word of God, based on the church approved outline, the other members have the opportunity to bring a word of prophecy, tongues and interpretation, a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom.³⁵

Second, home cell groups are the key to evangelism. Their evangelism is not door-to-door, but carried out primarily through the home cell group system. Each cell group becomes a center of revival in its neighborhood.

When a home cell meeting is full of life and when people are happy and sharing their faith and witnesses to what the Lord has done in their lives, other people are drawn to them...unbelievers want to know why this little group of Christians is so joyful when all around them there are so many troubles.

³⁴ Ibid., 51.

³⁵ Ibid.

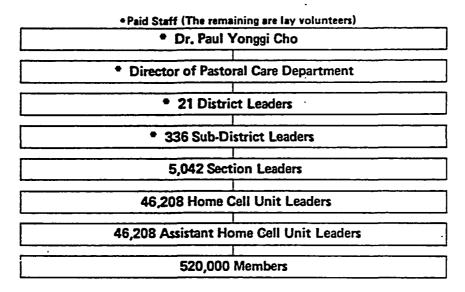
^{36 [}bid., 58-59.

In this sense, their church has become a living organism. The home cell groups are living cells, and they function like the cells in the human body. "In a living organism, the cells grow and divide." You'de Full Gospel Church grows both quantitatively and qualitatively through the home cell unit. It is the key to renewal as well as growth for this church.

³⁷ Ibid., 65.

Figure 2

Home Cell unit System and Annual Growth of Pastoral Staff THE HOME CELL UNIT SYSTEM



Seoul City has been divided into 21 districts by Y.F.G.C. (Yoido Full Gospel Church)

Each District is further divided into 11-18 Sub-Districts, each Sub-District contains about 14 Sections.

Each Section contains 5 to 15 Home Cell Units and each Home Cell Unit is composed of members from 5 to 10 households.

ANNUAL GROWTH OF PASTORAL STAFF

Class Year ification		69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86
Ordained Pastor		1	2	2	4	4	8	8	8	10	12	13	14	28	45	65	65	68	81
Licensed Pastor	M	2	2	5	6	7	8	9	14	21	28	33	53	77	73	82	82	72	75
	F	2	2	4	3	9	16	28	35	47	55	68	78	115	157	169	169	202	230
Intern Pastor	М	_	-	_	-	-	_	_	_	-	_	_	_	_	_	_		_	21
	F	-	1	ı	1	1	_	_	1	_	1	_	-	_	-	-	_	-	26
Total		5	6	11	13	20	32	45	57	78	95	114	145	220	275	316	316	342	433

Jan. 1987

This information is taken from Home Cell System, ed. Ruth Sholties (Secul: Church Growth International, 1987), 131.

CHAPTER 4

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

Once Wesley wrote before his death,

I am not afraid that the people called Methodist should ever cease to exist in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

Methodism exists today, and it is not a dead denomination.

Methodism is still one of the largest denominations in

America or Korea. However, Methodism is not a growing

denomination, but rather a declining one. Methodists once

held camp meetings for revivals. Now, we seldom see revival

services, such as camp meetings, annual revival services, or

any spiritual Bible studies within the Methodist church.

The church only has activities on Sunday. Many churches are

closed during the weekdays.

Somehow, Methodism has danger signs. Methodism is not healthy; it needs to be alive. It needs to be born again. The church needs to be renewed in form and content. In order to revive the Methodist spirit, we need to revive the pattern of spiritual discipline. If we use Wesley's term,

Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," <u>The Works of John Wesley</u>, 13:258.

we have to hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline. Wesleyan class meetings provide this pattern for church renewal and growth. True revival comes from internal renewal. According to Wesley, the class meeting is a God-given tool for the care of souls and the maintenance of church discipline.

In the class meeting, each member has a sense of belonging to each other as well as to Christ. Also, it is considered as the means of grace for the pursuit of holiness. Each member goes on to Christian perfection by mutual edification and intimate care. It is the place of personal renewal through the experience of regeneration. It is a field where religious and moral stagnation is healed. Through spiritual discipline, members experience personal growth in love and faith. As we mentioned, they grow in witness, opportunity, and stewardship. Also, it is the place for growth in koinonia.

Thus, community, or fellowship, consists in a sense of oneness, life lives with each other at sufficient depth for each person to be heard, accepted, in openness, honesty, in the process of discovering the real self (including his gifts for ministry), authenticity (stopping the playing of games and the wearing of masks), and in the process of becoming whole (the root meaning of salvation).²

For the lay leaders, it is a remarkable system of lay

^{2.} William Clemmons and Harvey Hester, Growth Through Groups (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 54.

leadership training, pastoral care and supervision. By meeting, the leaders examine the exact spiritual and moral condition of all members, and correct them or report to the pastor. They can watch over each other in love. Lay leaders have the opportunity to exercise their gifts and graces for the building of the Body of Christ. They experience the idea that all believers are called to ministry.

For Methodism, the class meeting became an important instrument for spreading and maintaining Scriptural holiness. It was the focal point of expanding Methodism. It was the heart of the Methodist movement. It was the cradle of the Methodist discipline. Therefore, as a whole, the class meeting was the pattern for renewal of the Christian life as a person or a community, and growth of the individual in depth, and the community as a whole through a koinonia and evangelism.

In the case of Korean churches, the class meeting or home cell units are the basic unit for church growth. As Henkle once mentioned, the decline of the class meeting brought the loss of spiritual dynamics within Methodism. The class meeting offers the best context for the spiritual renewal and growth for the community of faith in the world,

³ Henkle, 106.

including England, America, and Korea.

We need to learn the form and substance of the class meeting and an utilize the meeting as a basic unit for renewal and growth. There, many people accepted Jesus Christ as their savior, and grew up in His love. The class meeting is a truly God given tool for church renewal and growth.

Necessity for Reviving the Class Meeting

Because of the values mentioned above, many modern churches have tried to revive the class meeting, and those efforts produced many functionally equivalent small groups within or outside the churches.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the class meeting had become the exception among American Methodists. Some pastors of large churches divided their congregations into geographical groups under lay sub-pastors, and called the groups "units." The 1920 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church endorsed this method as a partial revival of a Methodist practice by inserting it in the regulations about classes "or units," which had been retained in the Discipline. However, these efforts failed to restore this historic institution to the core of Methodism. Also, they could not regain its vitality by the

⁴ iownsend, 2:509.

simple expedient of readjusting the class meeting.

Leatherman also discovered the necessity of the revival of the class meeting for some means of direct pastoral oversight when membership grew so large. He writes, "Something like the class meeting is needed as a means of shepherding the people." Many modern Christians have a deep hunger for spiritual meals and true koinonia in the community of faith. Small Christian groups are the center of life which satisfies a need for deep involvement and participation in intimate Christian fellowship.

Modern churches definitely need to revive the class meeting. They can assist each other in the quest for a deep spiritual life. Emerick once wrote,

In many of these groups people are finding again the deep and mutual concern, and atmosphere of acceptance in which they can really belong and they are exploring the means of Christian growth. In prayer, study and fellowship, people are realizing a new strength in their discipleship, and they are discovering a new understanding of the faith and its claims upon them.⁷

In order to revive the class meeting, we need to be

⁵ Robert Chiles, "Values of the Class Meeting for Redemptive Life Today," <u>Spiritual Renewal for Methodism</u>, ed. Samuel Emerick (Nashville: Methodist Evangelical Materials, 1958), 53.

⁶ Leatherman, 48.

⁷ Samuel Emerick, "Promise for the Road Ahead," Spiritual Renewal for Methodism, ed. Samuel Emerick, 73-74.

concerned with both the content and the context. If someone merely replants the class meeting in the modern context, they will fail. The British class meeting is not always effective in every context. Americans need to Americanize the class meeting. Koreans need to indigenize the class meeting for the Korean context. Also, we need to find some functional equivalent of the class meeting which provides intimacy, mutual care and support. In addition, discipline is absolutely necessary for the modern churches.

Functional Equivalents for the Modern Context

Education-centered. The Word-of-God-centered class meeting would be the Body-life of a growing church. Members learn the Word of God, which is the center for their Christian fellowship. In Korea, Christians learned the Korean vernacular language in the class meeting.

Missionaries realized the difficulties of the Chinese citerary language for the common people, so they revived the easy Korean language and taught it to the people in the class meetings. Language was the medium to enter the more in-depth world of history and culture. A new world was opened to the common people, including women and lower classes.

<u>Fellowship-centered</u>. A fellowship-centered class meeting is concerned with the multiple aims of church life and its commission, including pastoral care, evangelism and

discipleship. There should also be special class meetings for the deaf, blind, handicapped, singles, and older people. Those groups are designed to especially minister to unique needs, since people with special needs become deeply isolated, separated, and ignored in modern society. They need warm acceptance and a feeling of belonging. A fellowship-centered class meeting is essential to care for the larger congregations with individual attention.

Prayer-centered. Prayer is essential to church growth. The Korean church was founded on prayers. In the small prayer group, people pray for each other's needs, the spiritual leaders, and the church. Singing, sharing and reading the Bible are included. However, prayers are the center of this type of class meeting.

Self-support centered. This kind of class meeting concerns people who have common problems and tasks, such as singles, the divorced, senior citizens, alcoholics and clergy wives. A self-support centered class meeting is to help each other to cope with the same struggles and the problems, and to empower them to effectively carry out their tasks.

Many modern churches may ignore those persons because of heavy schedules. For the immigrants, this kind of class meeting is absolutely needed because the language barriers and cultural differences bring psychological diseases to

them. They need a self-support group to face their problems and solve them together.

According to the writer's experience, clergy and their wives urgently need this kind of group. In the book, Who Is the Minister's Wife, Charlotte Ross defined a clergy wife as neither clergy nor laity. A minister's wife is not a minister in the sense of having professional training and education. Moreover, she does not belong to the laity even if she is a lay person. Ministers' wives reveal their total loneliness while staying with members. Through a self-support group, they learn that their loneliness is not unique. They are encouraged to face the realities of their life.

Task-force centered. Sometimes, the church loses its prophetic stand to society. As world citizens, we face world-sized problems which Wesley or Korean Methodism were not aware of, such as air pollution, nuclear armaments, economic injustice, discrimination, denial of human rights, lack of food, and loss of natural resources. The church should be the first body to be aware of these global sufferings. As a good steward, the class meeting becomes

⁸ Charlotte Ross, Who Is the Minister's Wife (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 12.

⁹ Adam Daniel Corson-Finnerty, World Citizen (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982), 5.

more aware of the well-being of the whole creation. Like Isaiah, or Amos, the class meeting can be the prophetic voice for the tasks which our whole world faces.

Recommendations

Through this project, we realized that the class meeting as a small group is the basic cell unit of the church that has large congregations. If the class meeting is strong, the church will be healthy and revived.

Therefore, the writer emphasized the class meeting as a basic pattern for the church growth and renewal. However, the class meeting does not solve all the problems of church decline and stagnation. It will be one of the promising patterns, not an absolute magical one. Therefore, we need to revive the class meeting with careful consideration of the context and people. Contextualization of the class meeting is one way to successfully revive the class meeting. Moreover, there are some suggestions we should consider.

First, the class meeting should be lay-centered, not clergy-centered. Professional leadership by pastors may help a group to begin, but as soon as possible the members should become the center of the leadership. Historically, the clergy-centered religious societies in England could not last because the societies could not divide rapidly, due to the shortage of the professional leadership. The Wesleyan class meeting was lay-centered. Pastors were always near

for guidance and encouragement but did not dominate the meetings.

Second, the class meeting is not perfect in itself. It should be accompanied with daily spiritual discipline outside the meeting. "If the experience 'together' is substituted for the devotion 'alone,' the nerve of real growth in the group adventure is cut." Individual and group discipline should be incorporated. We cannot ignore both sides of discipline.

Third, we should always remind ourselves that the class meeting is not a substitute for worship. A balance between worship and meeting are necessary. The worship experience is truly the center of the community of the faith. Worship is the highlight of the life of the church. The differences between the class meeting and worship should be recognized.

Fourth, the meeting is not an end itself. The meeting exists for service and evangelism. The class meeting exists for the benefit of the whole body of Christ.

In conclusion, if we utilize the class meeting as a small group for effective church ministry, we can fulfill the multiple aims of the ministry, including renewal and growth. The Wesleyan class meeting has been the pattern for church renewal and growth including individuals, the church,

¹⁰ Emerick, 76.

and society. And it has been the mother of any other functional equivalent of the class meeting for the modern context. We need to revive the class meeting and to renew the existing class meeting as a spirit-filled one with power and strength.

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